



Concordia
UNIVERSITY

RECOMMENDATION FROM SENATE
FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Subject: Recommendation to approve the proposal to establish a School of General Studies

Meeting date: April 7, 2006

Motion: Upon motion duly moved and seconded, it was unanimously resolved:

Whereas the proposal to establish a School of General Studies was tabled for information at the March 17, 2006 meeting of Senate;

Whereas the proposal was forwarded to the Faculty Councils and the Council of the School of Graduate Studies for input;

Whereas the proposal has been endorsed by each Faculty Council as well as the Council of the School of Graduate Studies;

BE IT RESOLVED that Senate recommend to the Board of Governors the establishment of the School of General Studies effective as of June 1, 2007, in accordance with the parameters set out in Document US-2006-3-D10.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Danielle Tessier'.

Danielle Tessier
Secretary of Senate
May 2, 2006

**PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A
SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES
AT CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY**

This document proposes that we establish a new School of General Studies at Concordia University. This structural change would be in line with our strategic academic plan and our overriding commitment to become one of Canada's leading universities over the next decade. It would facilitate our efforts both to "coordinate and strategically manage... student enrollments" (Challenge Three of *Moving Ahead*) and to "provide...students with a first class education...which emphasizes excellence in teaching and learning" (Challenge Four), and would enable us to organize and, where appropriate, to integrate as seamlessly as possible the full range of Concordia's teaching activities.

The School of General Studies would bring together previously isolated academic units and services and coordinate their activities more closely with our mainstream credit operations. It would synergistically integrate our on-campus non-credit course offerings (presently offered by our Centre for Continuing Education); our credit and non-credit distance education courses (presently offered by both e-Concordia and Continuing Education); our plans for off-campus courses and programs (at locations in Québec, across Canada and abroad); and designated pre-university and entry-level credit courses and undergraduate certificate programs. The School of General Studies would also assume administrative responsibility for three categories of special students: Independent Students, Mature Students and Visiting Students enrolled at Concordia; and it would provide, in coordination with the faculties, remedial services and courses for Concordia students whose performance is below expectations (undergraduate program students in Conditional Standing or Failed Standing or on Academic Probation). The new integrated School would enable us to address more effectively recent significant declines in the numbers of both non-credit Continuing Education students and mature students at Concordia, as well as the increasing number of Independent Students and academically at-risk students. The School would be led by a dean and would be organized into four administrative divisions: non-credit studies, web-based distance education, off-campus education and credit studies.

Centre for Continuing Education

For more than 30 years non-credit courses at Concordia have been the nearly exclusive domain of our Centre for Continuing Education (CCE). CCE describes itself as "one of Québec's leading providers of life-long learning."

- CCE offers mostly on-campus non-credit courses and programs through four administrative departments: a Language Institute specializing in second language acquisition; a Computer Institute; a Business Administration unit (which includes a number of on-line courses and certificates); and a unit focused on communications/visual arts, hospitality and tourism (CAHT).
- Unlike comparable units at many other universities across Canada, at Concordia continuing education has traditionally been restricted to non-credit courses.

- CCE enrolled about 6,600 students in 2004/2005, 31% of whom were international students drawn from 110 countries. During the past six years, enrollment in CCE courses has dropped 19%, from 8,192 students generating 17,235 course registrations in 1999/2000 to 6,626 students generating 14,891 course registrations in 2004/2005.
- CCE employs a full-time administrative staff of 19, as well as its own pool of teachers (191 in 2005) who are contractually retained on a per-course basis dependent on enrollment.
- CCE is classified as a revenue-generating unit. As such, it is mandated to pay all of its operating expenses (including rent) and to generate a profit for Concordia. In 2004/2005 it generated a net profit of \$117 thousand on nearly \$6.7 million of revenue.

Notwithstanding its successes, Concordia's CCE has undoubtedly been negatively impacted by four factors.

- CCE has systematically been regarded as marginal to the principal academic mission of Concordia. It has therefore not been included in the university's academic planning processes and instead has been left to develop in relative academic isolation from the rest of the university.
- There has been little if any contact or coordination between CCE and Concordia units offering credit courses on similar subjects. Consequently, there has been almost no crossover of full-time or part-time professors between the credit and non-credit streams and little if any exchange of pedagogical information and/or materials.
- The longstanding prohibition on the offering of credit courses by CCE has limited the CCE market, particularly outside Montreal, and severely limited Concordia's strategic use of CCE courses and programs as a recruitment tool for credit programs.
- The development of on-line non-credit courses by e-Concordia is providing uncoordinated competition for CCE in markets which have traditionally been part of the CCE mandate.

E-Concordia

E-Concordia was established in 2001 as a federally incorporated company wholly owned by the Concordia University Foundation:

- E-Concordia is governed by a 12-member Board of Directors and daily operations are under the direction of a President and Chief Executive Officer. It employs a full-time staff of 16 and a part-time staff of 41 (including 37 teaching assistants).
- Its website indicates that e-Concordia's mandate is "to provide an alternative learning platform through a selection of flexible, practical and user-friendly on-line courses...drawn from Concordia University's prestigious curriculum and faculty." E-Concordia describes its services as including "a vast selection of course content from

Concordia University in Business, Engineering and Arts and Science” offered in both credit and non-credit formats.

- E-Concordia has thus far offered a very limited number of courses. It began to offer undergraduate courses in 2001/2002, offering one course that year to 43 students; five courses in 2002/2003 (with 2,362 student registrations); five courses in 2003/2004 (with 4,515 student registrations); eight courses in 2004/2005 (with 5,007 student registrations); and twelve courses in 2005/2006. Of the twelve courses being offered in 2005/2006, nine are from Arts & Science departments, two are from departments in the John Molson School of Business and one is from a department in the Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science.
- The start-up of e-Concordia was financed by a loan of \$750,000 from the Concordia University Foundation; in addition, e-Concordia receives a subsidy of \$250,000 annually from the Concordia University operating budget and 100% of the tuition paid by the students (\$730,281 in 2004/2005) for e-Concordia courses. Concordia University receives 100% of the *enseignement* funding (nearly \$2.2 million in 2004/2005) and 100% of the *soutien* funding (more than \$750,000 in 2004/2005) provided by the provincial government for FTE-based funding for registrations in these courses. In 2004/2005 e-Concordia operated at a net loss of \$72,702 on revenues of about \$1.1 million.

The concept of developing a limited number of web-based undergraduate courses has considerable pedagogical and financial merit. Whether the financial model chosen for e-Concordia was necessary or appropriate, I will leave for the lawyers and accountants to decide. Nevertheless and notwithstanding the appeal of web-based instruction to some students, e-Concordia's development has been limited by five factors.

- Most Concordia professors are still skeptical about e-Concordia, unclear about its mandate and operations and concerned about its corporate identity separate from the university.
- The selection of courses offered by e-Concordia lacks coherence. The Board of Directors has already accepted the Provost's suggestion of nearly a year ago that packages of courses (such as a minor in Canadian Studies and a Foundation Year program) would be more marketable than the individual courses that we now offer which are, for the most part, unrelated to each other.
- The development of e-Concordia courses has been significantly limited by the lack of buy-in from the faculty deans. Two of the faculties already had web-based courses running prior to the launching of e-Concordia and the deans, rightly or wrongly, have felt that significant money-making courses have been expropriated by e-Concordia, and that in addition they are losing tuition revenue that used to be part of their income for courses that the faculties developed in the first place. As well, deans have repeatedly indicated that they should have final authority over which of their faculty's courses are offered by e-Concordia and they have protested, without apparent effect, e-Concordia solicitations directly to department chairs.

- There appears to be a serious issue of quality control in the operation of e-Concordia courses. This relates both to the selection and supervision of teaching assistants and to their interactions with students. To a considerable extent, the e-Concordia apparatus separates the professor from the students and e-Concordia employees are, however unintentionally, usurping functions and responsibilities that should not be separated from the instructor of record or from the chair of the department which is giving credit for the course.
- E-Concordia has thus far not attracted many non-Concordia students to Concordia. It appears that to date more than 90% of e-Concordia students are already registered in classroom-based courses and programs at Concordia. This has weakened the financial attractiveness of e-Concordia to deans and chairs and increased skepticism about the financial viability or at least the financial attractiveness of web-based education. The proportion of non-Concordia students in our web-based courses is likely to improve significantly only when the issues mentioned above have been addressed. Fundamental changes to the structure and/or operations of e-Concordia appear to be necessary to maximize the success of web-based education at Concordia.

Off-Campus Education

Concordia has had a long tradition of offering courses off-campus on at least a modest scale. Nevertheless, this remains an underdeveloped area of activity for us.

- Before it closed in 1997/1998, Concordia's Office of Off-Campus Education offered Concordia courses and programs at the Saidye Bronfman Centre, on the West Island of Montreal and at various other locations in Québec. Even after the closure of the office, Concordia has continued to offer a limited number of classroom-based courses for academic credit off-campus: at the Tav Institute in Montreal, on First Nation's reserves, and abroad in Paris and Beijing.
- While the number of off-campus courses offered by Concordia has increased over the past five years, the number of students enrolled in Concordia off-campus courses has declined significantly. Concordia offered seven off-campus courses in 2000/2001, but by 2004/2005 the number of off-campus courses had increased to 32. Despite that increase, Concordia saw a decrease from 964 students (96.4 FTEs) registered in off-campus courses in 2000/2001 to 647 registered students (64.7 FTEs) in 2004/2005.
- We are now pursuing opportunities to expand our off-campus offerings (both credit and non-credit) in the Montreal region to include off-campus sites in Laval and Longueuil, in both cases in partnership with sister Québec universities.
- We are also negotiating partnerships with institutions abroad to provide off-campus settings for the first year or years of joint programs and for our web-based courses. In China, for example, foreign universities are not allowed to offer courses (web-based or classroom-based) without a Chinese partner.

- We are also in the process of identifying key university partners around the world who can host Concordia students choosing to study abroad as part of their academic programs.
- At the present time there is no Concordia administrative unit that is mandated to develop and coordinate credit and noncredit off-campus and distance education course offerings.

Special Students

Concordia's longstanding commitment to accessibility for students from diverse circumstances is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the number of "special students" that we enroll each year. There are three categories of special students at Concordia: Mature Students, Independent Student and Visiting Students. Together they represent about 12% of our unweighted FTE enrollment, principally at the undergraduate level. Thus, special students are financially important to Concordia, as well as fulfilling part of our historical mission of service to the community.

- "Mature Students" (section 13.6.1 of the 2005/2006 Concordia Undergraduate Calendar) were an integral part of Sir George Williams College and then Sir George Williams University and Concordia has retained this tradition as a cornerstone of its identity.
 - Mature Students are adult students who lack the academic prerequisites to be admitted directly to a university undergraduate program. Such students typically do not have a CEGEP diploma or, in some cases, even a high school diploma. They must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents, above the age of 21 and normally must not have been enrolled in a full-time program of study for at least two years after reaching the age of 18. Mature Students are required to take an additional 18 credits of courses beyond the standard 90-credit degree program.
 - The number of Mature Students entering Concordia appears to have declined about 16% over the last decade. In 1995/1996 670 Mature Students were admitted to undergraduate programs at Concordia; by 2004/2005 that number had fallen to 562 students. While these students enroll in programs in all four faculties, the majority enroll in programs in the Faculty of Arts and Science (65% in 2004/2005). The sharpest decline in Mature Student admissions has been in the John Molson School of Business, while the most significant growth in Mature Student admissions has been in the Faculty of Fine Arts.
 - The average age of newly admitted mature students has declined over the past decade. Ten years ago nearly 82% of Mature Students at Concordia were below age 35 and about 10% were above the age of 40; in 2004/2005 90.5% were below the age of 35 and less than 5% were above the age of 40. In fact, about 82% of newly admitted Mature Students in 2004/2005 were between the ages of 21 and 30, not very different in age from our non-Mature Student stream population.
 - In 2004/2005 2,141 Mature Students were registered at Concordia, and they generated 1,343 FTEs.

- Concordia presently operates a Centre for Mature Students which was established in 1978 to deal with this segment of the student population. The Centre is headed by a director, presently employs a full-time staff of three academic advisers and a varying number of casual staff. Its operating budget for 2004/2005 was \$168,844. After consultation with the vice deans and associate deans of the four faculties, the Vice Provost has recommended the closure of the Centre. The recommendation was made in light of the decline in the number and average age of Mature Students at Concordia in recent years and because academic advising is already available to Mature Students in the faculty which houses the program in which they are enrolled.
- Independent Students (section 13.6.3 of the 2005/2006 Concordia Undergraduate Calendar) are also an integral part of the history of Concordia University. They reinforce the traditional accessibility of the university by allowing individuals in the community to register for our credit courses.
 - Independent Students meet Concordia's regular admission requirements but chose to register for individual undergraduate courses without applying for admission to an undergraduate degree or certificate program. In some cases Independent Students will already have earned a university degree at Concordia or elsewhere.
 - Independent students are restricted to a maximum of 18 credits per year, with a maximum of nine credits each in the fall and winter semesters. They may subsequently transfer the credits earned to a degree program at Concordia, but in the case of the Faculty of Arts and Science, a maximum of 30 credits taken as an Independent Student may be credited toward a degree program.
 - Independent Students can be Canadian citizens, permanent residents or international students with student visas. Concordia saw an increase from 3,298 independent students in 1995/1996 to 4,289 in 2004/2005. The mean age of these students decreased from 28.5 to 27.5 over the decade. These students generated 751.7 FTES in 1995/ 1996, a number that rose steadily to 1,129.1 in 2004/2005. Between 30 and 45% of these students subsequently transferred to degree programs at Concordia.
 - During the 2004/2005 academic year Concordia enrolled 4,289 Independent Students, mostly at the undergraduate level.
 - Independent Students do not have a home faculty and therefore come under the jurisdiction of the Registrar for academic advising and Student Requests.
 - For the last two academic years the Registrar's office has sent out letters to Independent Students who have successfully completed 12 credits or more and are in acceptable academic standing (annual GPA of 2.0 or more) encouraging them to transfer to Concordia degree programs.
- Visiting Students (section 13.6.2 of the 2005/2006 Concordia Undergraduate Calendar) are also present at Concordia in significant numbers and they add to the diversity of the university.

- Visiting Students are undergraduate students from other universities who obtain permission from their home universities to come to enroll in undergraduate courses at Concordia.
- Concordia enrolled 1,077 Visiting Students in 2004/2005. These Visiting Students generated 3,766 three-credit course registrations or 377 FTEs.
- Concordia saw an increase from 775 Visiting Students in 1995/1996 to 1,077 in 2004/2005. Visiting Students generated 257.2 FTEs in 1995/1996, a number that rose steadily to 376.6 in 2004/2005. The majority of these students were not affiliated with any of our four faculties. Most Visiting Students are Canadian citizens or permanent residents and are the administrative responsibility of the Registrar's Office. Visiting Students from outside Canada are the administrative responsibility of the Centre for International Academic Cooperation.

At-Risk Students

It is not surprising that, given our historical commitment to accessibility and the varied academic backgrounds of our very diverse student body, Concordia has a significant number of undergraduate students who are at risk academically.

- While undergraduate academic performance regulations vary from faculty to faculty, the overall minimum acceptable annual weighted grade-point average (WGPA) is 2.0 on a 4.3 scale.
- Conditional Standing applies to undergraduate students whose annual WGPA falls below 2.0 but not below 1.50. Students in Conditional Standing are expected to return to acceptable standing at the time of the next assessment of their academic record.
- Failed Standing applies to undergraduate students whose annual WGPA falls below 1.50 or who are placed in Conditional Standing in two successive assessments. Students in Failed Standing are withdrawn from their academic programs. They may apply for readmission (in some faculties after a period away from their studies) and if accepted they are placed on Academic Probation and expected to return to acceptable standing at the time of their next academic assessment. Students who are placed in Failed Standing twice are dismissed from the University
- During the 2004/2005 academic year 3,548 undergraduate students at Concordia were declared to be "at risk" based on their academic performance. This included 1,463 who were placed in Conditional Standing, 1,614 who were placed in Failed Standing for the first time and 471 who were placed in Failed Standing for the second time. In total these students represent over 10% of the undergraduate headcount in 2004/2005.
- Over the past decade and as our student population has grown, the number of at-risk students at Concordia has increased from 2,800 to 3,500. During the same period the number of students in Conditional Standing at Concordia has increased from 1,100 to 1,450.

- Over the past decade the Faculty of Arts and Science has accounted for 54% of Concordia's at-risk students, the John Molson School of Business for 17%, Engineering and Computer Science for 18%, and Fine Arts for 2%. The remaining 9% are Independent or Visiting Students who are not affiliated with a faculty.
- Each faculty is presently responsible to provide academic advising to its students who have been placed in Conditional Standing or on Academic Probation and to decide whether and when to readmit first-time Failed Students to its programs. The effort and the results vary from faculty to faculty and from department to department or program to program. Nevertheless, there is no coordinated university-wide effort to help academically at-risk students to improve their academic performance.

The School of General Studies

The preceding pages have described in some detail how Concordia, Québec's fastest growing university during the past decade, presently deals with a range of non-mainstream academic activities and students. The new School of General Studies at Concordia University would provide a strategically integrated academic unit which could more effectively contribute to the achievement of Concordia's academic planning objectives. The proposal is based on four assumptions:

- That notwithstanding Concordia's considerable success over the past three decades, we can do more to provide our 43,500 students with an integrated teaching and learning environment appropriate to one of Canada's leading universities located in one of the world's great cities.
- That Concordia's current administrative structures create silos of nearly autonomous academic activity (both core and peripheral) which were not necessarily meant to be but have in fact become duplicative and mutually exclusive rather than complementary.
- That there are five categories of Concordia students who are particularly marginalized and not that well-served in our current structures and operations: non-credit students, distance education students, off-campus students, special students and at-risk students.
- That an integrated academic structure which is grounded in our mainstream credit operation, but which also pays particular attention to the marginalized students identified above, would be desirable.

The mission of the new School of General Studies would be to work closely with the four existing faculties to create a much more integrated approach to credit and non-credit teaching at Concordia University (whether on-campus, off-campus or web-based) in line with the academic priorities set out in our Senate-approved academic plan. More specifically, it would in partnership with our four existing faculties coordinate and market our on-campus, off-campus and web-based non-credit courses and designated credit courses to address more effectively the following Concordia priorities:

- To reinforce our traditional commitment to make university education accessible;

- To address increasing demands for life-long learning opportunities from members of our external communities;
- To serve as a significant local, national and international recruitment opportunity for Concordia's mainstream credit degree programs;
- To ensure that our non-traditional students (mature, independent and visiting) are provided with the training and support that they need to succeed in their studies;
- To work with our at-risk credit students to encourage and facilitate and wherever possible to complete their studies.

The School of General Studies would be headed by an academic dean who would report to the Provost. The new School would be comprised of four divisions (Non-Credit Studies, web-based Distance Education, Off-Campus Education and Credit Studies), each led by a director reporting to the dean.

The Dean of the School of General Studies would be:

- A new administrative position established by the Board of Governors and filled after an advisory search process chaired by the Provost in accordance with Board policies and procedures for academic dean searches;
- Expected to work closely and in coordination with the faculty deans to achieve the academic objectives and performance requirements of Concordia University;
- Mandated, after appropriate consultation, to enunciate a vision for the School of General Studies compatible with Concordia's academic planning priorities and the objectives set out in the current document;
- Required to design and submit for approval a detailed business plan for the School which would simultaneously achieve our institutional objectives in a timely manner and generate revenues which could be reinvested in the academic priorities of the university;
- Directed to search for and recommend the appointment of Directors for each of the four divisions of the Faculty.

The Director of the Division of Non-Credit Studies would be:

- Responsible for the development and coordination of all non-credit courses offered by Concordia University and for the administration of all non-credit courses offered on Concordia's two campuses;
- Expected to work closely with the deans of the faculties (or their designated vice/associate deans) and the directors of other divisions of the School of General Studies to create and monitor the quality of non-credit courses and programs which can be taken on their own or dovetailed with complementary credit-stream programs if students so decide;

- Required to work collaboratively with the directors of the Divisions of web-based Distance Education and Off-Campus Education to designate, develop and approve non-credit courses (particularly ESL courses and university study skills courses) that would be offered internationally in either a web-based Distance education or off-campus mode;
- Expected to develop links with relevant academic departments at Concordia in order to update pedagogy in non-credit courses, make it easier for non-credit students to transfer into credit programs and provide a broader range of relevant extracurricular activities for interested students;
- Expected to develop, in collaboration with the director of the Division of Credit Studies, remedial non-credit courses for at-risk credit-stream students and non-traditional students to help them to succeed in their studies.

The Director of the Division of Web-Based Distance Education would be:

- Responsible for the development, coordination and administration of all web-based credit and non-credit distance education courses offered by Concordia University;
- Expected to work closely with the deans of the faculties (or their designated vice/associate deans) and the directors of other divisions of the School of General Studies to create and monitor the quality of web-based credit and non-credit distance education courses, as well as coherent groupings of such courses;
- Required to work collaboratively with the directors of the Divisions of Non-Credit Education and Off-Campus Education to designate, develop and approve web-based distance education courses and programs that would be particularly aimed at international students, but would also be available to Canadian students from outside Québec;
- Expected to develop links with relevant academic departments at Concordia in order to update pedagogy in web-based distance education courses, make it easier for distance education credit students to integrate successfully into on-campus credit courses and programs and provide a broader range of web-accessible extracurricular activities for interested students;
- Expected to work in coordination with the deans of the four faculties and the Director of Enrollment Services to use Concordia's web-based distance education credit courses and programs as an important recruitment and assessment tool for international and non-Québec Canadian students who may eventually apply for admission to Concordia's on-campus credit degree programs.

The Director of the Division of Off-Campus Education would be:

- Responsible for the development, coordination and administration of all credit and non-credit off-campus courses other than web-based courses offered by Concordia University;
- Expected to explore vigorously, in collaboration with the deans of the faculties and the directors of other divisions of the School of General Studies, opportunities to expand our off-campus offerings in Québec, across Canada and around the world;
- Expected to work closely with the deans of the faculties (or their designated vice/associate deans) and the directors of other divisions of the School of General Studies to designate, administer and monitor the quality of off-campus courses which can be taken on their own or dovetailed with complementary on-campus credit and/or non-credit courses and programs if students so decide;
- Required to work collaboratively with the directors of the Divisions of Non-Credit Education and web-based Distance Education to develop off-campus credit and non-credit courses (particularly ESL courses and university study skills courses) that may be offered internationally in an off-campus mode in cooperation with our sister universities abroad;
- Expected to develop links with relevant academic departments at Concordia in order to update pedagogy in off-campus courses, make it easier for off-campus students to transfer into on-campus credit and non-credit courses and programs and provide a broader range of accessible extracurricular activities for interested off-campus students;
- Expected to work in coordination with the deans of the four faculties and the Director of Enrollment Services to use Concordia's off-campus credit courses and programs as an important recruitment and assessment tool for international and non-Québec Canadian students who may eventually apply for admission to Concordia's on-campus credit degree programs.

The Director of the Division of Credit Studies would be:

- Responsible for the academic progress of all special students (Mature Students until they have satisfactorily completed 18 credits at Concordia, Independent Students and Visiting Students as described earlier) and at-risk students (those in Conditional Standing, on Academic Probation or in Failed Standing as described earlier), including development and coordination of courses and services intended to ensure their academic success;
- Expected to work closely with the deans of the faculties (or their designated vice/associate deans) and the directors of other divisions of the School of General Studies to create and monitor the quality of such courses (both credit and non-credit) and programs;

- Expected to develop links with academic departments at Concordia in order to work in partnership to facilitate the academic success of special students and at-risk students interested in the courses and programs of specific departments;
- Expected to develop, in collaboration with the director of the Division of Non-Credit Studies, remedial non-credit courses for at-risk credit-stream students and special students to help them to succeed in their studies;
- Expected to work with in collaboration with the directors of the Divisions of Non-Credit Studies, web-based Distance Education and Off-Campus Education to encourage, facilitate and ensure the success of students from those divisions who decide to transfer to on-campus degree study.

OPERATIONAL ISSUES

The decision to establish a new School of General Studies at Concordia would ideally be made in winter 2006. The position of dean should be filled as soon as possible thereafter, but preferably no later than January 2007. The new School would be expected to be fully operational by July 2007.

In the above timeframe Concordia faces a number of transitional challenges that will need to be managed over the next 18 months.

The present non-credit operations of our Centre for Continuing Education would for the most part be subsumed in the Division of Non-Credit Studies beginning July 1, 2007.

The present web-based operations of e-Concordia would for the most part be subsumed in the Division of Distance Education beginning July 1, 2007. The key to the long-term success of web-based instruction at Concordia is to encourage buy-in from the mainstream academic community, particularly the faculty deans, department chairs and individual professors.

- The deans of the faculties will play a leadership role in encouraging the development of a limited number of web-based distance education credit courses in each faculty. They will be influential in making key strategic decisions regarding student recruitment management and revenue potential enhancement through this division.
- Department chairs will become more aware of the opportunity that strategically managed web-based instruction provides to supplement undergraduate enrollments; recruit new students; provide elective courses for students at other universities; increase opportunities for graduate students to gain both teaching assistantship experience and additional income; and enhance the teaching profile of their departments, both nationally and internationally.
- Our best teachers should be given the opportunity to develop and teach our web-based courses. They will become ambassadors for Concordia (and Québec and Canada) and our face to the world outside Concordia. They will introduce both Concordia and their disciplines to a new generation of Concordia students, thereby facilitating undergraduate

student recruitment and providing training for graduate students who serve as teaching assistants.

The present advising and support services provided by our Centre for Mature Students would for the most part be subsumed in the Division of Credit Studies of the School of General Studies effective July 1, 2007. During the transition period two issues will need to be addressed.

- The advising and support services presently offered only to Mature Students will need to be expanded to address the needs of all Special Students (Mature, Independent and Visiting).
- A Students At-Risk Task Force should be established as soon as possible, to assess the challenges facing academically at-risk students at Concordia and to prepare, no later than fall 2006, a comprehensive mandate for the Division of Credit Studies to facilitate the success of at-risk students in their studies at Concordia.

This new initiative will make a significant difference to our current and future students by developing a promising new link that builds on our past achievements and supports the agreed-upon strategies of our five-year academic plan, *Moving Ahead*. As one of Canada's largest and most diverse universities we have the opportunity and the responsibility to share our success with all members of our community. Only in this way can we move ahead towards becoming one of Canada's leading universities in the twenty-first century. We cannot afford to wait.

Martin Singer, Provost
March 2006